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Subject: FW: Sampling process

Sampling Process

Sampling crews have been and will be sampling locations from Silverton (and above Silverton, near the Mine), all the way to the Colorado border, a distance of approximately 60 miles. Crews will also sample in New Mexico. The distance between sampling locations involves driving time, especially where sampling locations on the river are in remote, difficult to access locations.

Samples are taken from the river using a hand pump or peristaltic pump. Samples must be filtered. Once at the location, collecting the sample may take ½ hour or more.

The standard procedure for analyzing for metals requires a 16 hour hold time with the preservative. EPA will be adding preservative prior to shipping samples to minimize time needed for the laboratory analysis.

The samples must then be transported to a laboratory, either hand-delivered or shipped. The turnaround time for laboratories is different depending on the number of personnel available and number of instruments available. Small labs may only be able to guarantee a 48 hour turnaround time. Medium and large capacity labs will be able to provide faster turnaround times. EPA is currently using a local laboratory in Durango; which has been extremely cooperative and plans to work through the weekend for this project; however, it is a small capacity lab and will not be able to process the high volume of samples anticipated to be taken.

EPA has now procured the services of a laboratory in Savannah, Georgia. Samples will be shipped overnight to the lab. EPA has requested the fastest possible turnaround time, which is likely to be 24 hours once the lab has received the samples.

The first round of 19 samples collected the evening of the spill and morning following were immediately driven to the EPA laboratory in Golden and prepped for analysis. Those lab results should be available on the website soon.

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